

Being all on foot their march was necessarily laborious over the lightly crested snow, through which the broke at every step. On the right hand and on the left, as they passed along, rose the primeval woods, in which were great beech and maple trees, mantled in dazzling sheets of snow, and Nature itself was enshrouded in funeral white, and except for the steady tramp of the troops, while they proceeded on their way the forest was as silent as the grave. At Twenty Mile Creek all was quiet, until the first dim redness tinged the eastern sky, and the hills and the woods grew visible in the morning light, when suddenly the sound of arms was heard.

The Canadian Rangers, having risen from their wintry bed, were all alert, and after exchanging a few scattered, ineffective shots with the enemy, on the western hills, hastily retreated with the object of drawing the invaders from their strong position. This strategem of inducing the Americans to leave their location on the opposite heights was well contrived, and had it been skilfully followed up could hardly have failed to effect the entire destruction of the enemy's force. Holmes, on discovering that the company of Canadian Rangers had disappeared, waited some time for their return, and then despatched Lieut. Knox with the Michigan Rangers to reconnoitre, and upon his return he reported that the Canadians had retreated with the utmost precipitation, leaving articles of baggage and camp furniture scattered about, and that judging from the number of fires, and the appearance of the trail, the strength of the enemy did not exceed sixty or seventy men.

The American commandant, displeased at the thought of his having retreated on the previous day from such a slender force, and assuming that he had been previously wrongly informed as to the real strength of his opponents, now abandoned his position on the western hills and commenced a close pursuit of the flying Canadians, intending to endeavor to capture Delaware before the end of the day. He, however, had not proceeded more than five miles, when Captain Lee of the Michigan Militia Dragoons, who was in advance of the main body,

reported to him that the British and Canadians in considerable force were now arranging themselves in order of battle on ground of their own choosing; Caldwell, in the meantime, having been joined by the main body under Basden.

At this time the golden opportunity of making a flank movement through the woods, and thus cutting off the Americans from a retreat to Twenty Mile Creek, presented itself to Basden. In fact he was strongly urged to do this by those of his men who were familiar with the physical features of the locality, and particularly by the two Caldwells. But as he was by no means a strategist, he neglected doing so, and consequently lost his move in this game of military tactics. Had this been done, Holmes, in all probability, would have been driven towards Delaware or Port Talbot, and without forage or other supplies, placed between two fires, in which case his entire command would have been either ultimately destroyed or compelled to surrender. Having taken advantage of Basden's blunder, he rapidly retreated and was thus finally enabled to resume his former position on the western bank of the creek, and at once began preparations for the struggle, notwithstanding the complaints of many of his men, who again strongly pressed him to retreat farther. Nor was this rapid retreat without its effect upon the mind of Basden, who only saw in Holmes' swift movements, the effects of fear and settle a design on the part of his foeman to avoid a conflict.

The American troops being indifferently drilled, were formed in a hollow square, with the baggage and horses in the centre, in order to avoid the necessity of attempting military evolutions in action, which they were unable to perform. The brow of the west hill overhanging the creek, across which elevation stretched the road, was occupied by the detachment of the 24th Tennessee and 28th Kentucky, while those of the 26th Vermont and 27th New York defended the hills and the breastwork on the north side of the American position. The ravine here making a slight bend in a north-westerly direction, a very short distance beyond the north side of the

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Basden. twenty-n others of officers, b could be spirit, an ments coe idently e be able to less on the positively further f ada. Ha dence and probabili so, but b brave, he front att stance, ei flank, th ing the n ing the p desultory occurring vance ar previous with the was full; greatly i British s about fiv day, the they arr the wid which T its wat Militia i pany of well we moveme north si enemy's of the 2 the 1st Caldwell right, w igan M